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ABSTRACT

The Wood County Literacy Coalition (WCLC), in Wisconsin, is a unique partnership of state- and federally-funded employment and training agencies, local non-profit agencies, and area vocational and technical colleges. There is a great need for such cooperative efforts in the provision of adult literacy services. To succeed, all involved literacy providers must recognize that no one agency or educational design will successfully address all of a community's adult literacy needs; all providers must be convinced that the benefits of cooperation are greater than the costs; each organization must understand that the vested interests of other participants are as valid as its own; and there must be agreement on how funding sources will be pursued and used. In Wood County, literacy education, as well as other education, employment, and training efforts, are all delivered by local Job Centers. The Job Centers are described as "one-stop shopping centers," providing coordinated, seamless employment and training services for job seekers and employers. Job Centers are the primary mechanism for the operation of Job Training Partnership Act and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills employment and training programs. Before the Job Centers were developed, a series of local meetings were held to solicit input on desired features. The major features included: (1) shared equipment, staff, and facilities; (2) coordinated planning and systems implementation; (3) uniform assessment, employability, referral, case management, and file systems to be shared by all agencies; and (4) provision of adult basic education classes, computer-based learning, and one-on-one literacy tutoring in the Job Centers. The Job Center model works because, among other reasons, the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council does not operate the programs; collaborative efforts concentrate on educational needs not presently addressed or areas where resources are insufficient; the ability for a student to use all instructional delivery options; and the avoidance of duplication of effort. (KP)

ED 376 896

A Collaborative Model for Providing Literacy Training Utilizing the "One Stop Shop" Concept

A Workshop Presentation at the 1994 NETWORK Conference: "Workforce Development Promises to Keep"

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A Collaborative Model for Providing Literacy Training Utilizing the "One-Stop Shop" Concept

The Wood County Wisconsin Literacy Coalition is a unique partnership of state and federally-funded employment and training agencies, local non-profit agencies, and the area vocational and technical college--all dedicated to improving adult basic education services. The Coalition is a planning and oversight group established to help increase the coordination of basic skills and literacy instruction in Wood County. This coalition was developed through the auspices of a pilot grant received for coalition building around the issue of literacy through the UPS Foundation and United Way of America. This grant was one of ten in the nation.

There is a great need for cooperative efforts among educators in the provision of adult literacy education services. Unless cooperation occurs, literacy education providers present society with an unseemly squabble for learners and resources. In-fighting among literacy education providers will divert our energies from our primary mission, the literacy education of adults, and discourage members of our society at large from devoting additional funding to adult literacy education services.

In order for any cooperative literacy venture to succeed several things must occur. All literacy education providers must recognize that no one agency or educational design will successfully address all of a community's adult literacy needs, all providers must be convinced that the benefits of cooperation are greater than the cost of participation, each organization must understand that the vested interests of all other members of the coalition are as valid as their own vested interests, and there must be agreement on how funding sources will be pursued and used.

First, it is clear that the problem of adult illiteracy in our society is so great that no one organization or agency is likely to run out of potential students (clients) any time soon. When there is recognition that the challenge of adult literacy education is enormous, fears of an organization working itself out of a job quickly disappear. According to recent figures from the U.S. Department of Education all Federal, State, Municipal, and Private literacy efforts combined reach, on an annual basis, 5% of all U.S. adults in need of literacy education services. The Department also estimates that the U.S. population in need of literacy education grows at about 7% each year. The need for literacy education will not be resolved in the near future. In addition, because adults are individuals, it is clear that no one learning technique is suitable for all adult learners. It is this very variety of adult learner needs that makes a coalition for adult literacy a logical approach to literacy education for

adults, because not all providers are equally proficient at the various instructional designs.

Second, each member organization of a coalition must believe that the "return" on coalition participation exceeds the "cost" of involvement. Membership in a coalition brings with it costs such as some loss of freedom of action, perhaps an admission that no one agency can "do it all", and risks the conclusion by some members of the community or by funding agencies that more than one organization or agency may have a legitimate claim to financial or other support for literacy education. All members of a literacy coalition must believe that participation in the coalition will be more beneficial than remaining aloof from the venture.

The third process that must occur is the recognition and respect of the vested interests of the various member of the coalition. Within most coalitions conflicts of interest will occur. If a coalition is to survive and to thrive, these conflicts must be resolved to the satisfaction of all interested members. It is unrealistic to expect any coalition member to abandon its particular interests, i.e., its funding sources, audience, special promotional strategies, enrollment count requirements, etc. Conflicts will arise, and coalition members must be open with each other about these differences if a joint resolution of these difficulties is to occur. Avoiding the attitude of "I'm right and they're wrong", which in extreme circumstances borders on self-righteousness, is helpful in resolving differences related to vested interests.

The topic of funding for literacy education is a critical issue for a literacy coalition. Recently the U.S. Congress established a law that guaranteed access of all adult literacy education providers to Adult Basic Education Act funds. In the past years this funding was often not available to all providers, due to the funds distribution process in some states. Apparently, our political leaders believe that having more agencies fight over an already insufficient amount of money will further the cause of adult literacy. One could almost conclude that some members of the U.S. Congress hope that literacy educators can be fooled into believing that maldistribution of adequate funds is the only flaw in financial support for adult literacy education.

A successful literacy coalition can defuse a potential for competition for resources in a number of ways. First, there should be an open agreement that efforts to secure funding by a member agency will be supported by other members of the coalition. This support can take the form of letters of endorsement, testimony at hearings, assistance in the provision of data for grant applications, and assistance in writing grant applications. Secondly, there must be an agreement that funding sources basic to the survival of an agency will not be sought by other members of the coalition. No organization is likely to "cooperate" itself out of existence.

Among the services that a coalition can provide are a variety of services for the same learner, a variety of services to learners who have different needs, and referral of learners among agencies. Social service agency staff persons are generally stretched to their work limits and they would rather make a referral to one literacy coalition, which then designs services for learners. The alternative

strategy of the social service agency staff trying to figure out which agency to send a potential client to is often not viewed as a good use of social service agency staff time. A coalition can also present a united front for additional resources for adult literacy agencies. In our experience a united request for funding has been extremely successful.

Link between literacy and "one-stop shopping"

In Wood County and the Central Wisconsin Service Delivery Area literacy education efforts, as well as other education, employment and training efforts, are all delivered out of the local Job Centers. At the same time that the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council, Literacy Council of Wood County, and General Education program at Mid-State Technical College began undertaking the building of a broader coalition of literacy providers in Wood County, the Central Wisconsin SDA was being selected as one of the ten pilots in the nation for the Job Training 2000 initiative, which was an initiative to develop, among other things, "one-stop shopping" centers for the delivery of a wide range of education, employment, and training services.

History of Job Centers in the Central Wisconsin Service Delivery Area (CWSDA)

The Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council (CWPIC) has been involved in the implementation of Job Centers since 1987 when it was selected as one of Wisconsin's four Job Center pilot sites. In actuality, CWPIC began development of co-located facilities in 1985 and established the first of five job centers in 1986.

The simple definition of a Job Center used by CWPIC is a "one-stop shopping center" providing coordinated, "seamless" employment and training services for job seekers and employers. In 1987, at the direction of the Wisconsin State Legislature, the state Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations developed a Job Center Request for Proposals. The mandated partners in the original RFP were the Private Industry Council and Job Service. Shortly thereafter, the Technical College System became an equal partner by earmarking Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) 8% funds to be utilized for the Technical College System's participation in Job Centers. Utilizing its Job Center pilot grant, the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council created co-located Job Center facilities in Marquette, Waushara, and Adams Counties.

Co-located Job Center Agencies

The Job Center model has become the primary mechanism for operation of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) employment and training programs in the Central Wisconsin SDA. Partner agencies in the Job Centers, besides the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council, Wisconsin Job Service, and the technical colleges, are up to twenty

employment, training, and educational agencies including:

1. County Departments of Social Services
2. County Human Service Agencies
3. The State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
4. Community Action Agencies
5. Literacy Councils, and a variety of other agencies.

Most of these agencies are members of the Wood County Literacy Coalition and coordinate with literacy providers within the Coalition to develop a literacy education program for their clients.

Why the Central Wisconsin Job Centers have developed in the way they have

Before the Job Centers were developed, a series of local meetings were held to solicit input. As groups were polled regarding the features they desired in a Job Center, goals were set to include these features in the Job Centers. The major features include:

Establishment of Co-located facilities

It was decided that co-location was the best strategy for several reasons. The day-to-day contact is necessary to maximize coordination and communication among programs. Rental costs can be reduced because office space and common areas can be shared by all Job Center agencies. In addition, basic office equipment can be shared by all Job Center agencies. Certain support staff can be shared, such as clerical staff. This is especially important where most of the staff is part-time due to budget cuts. Finally, Job Center staff are cross-trained to make each agency aware of the resources available through the other Job Center agencies. This allows clients to be exposed to the complete range of available Job Center services, even if personnel from these agencies are not physically present at the time the applicant comes into the Job Center.

Coordinated planning and systems implementation

Of equal or even more importance than co-location, however, are the issues of coordinated planning and systems implementation, better known as collaboration. In early Job Center planning meetings, a need for an "independent" Case Manager was identified as being crucial, because of a concern with inappropriate referrals and control. When JTPA 8% funds were made available at no cost to the Private Industry Council through the Wisconsin Technical College System, a position was structured so that programming decisions for clients would be made jointly by all members of the Job Center through case management. The Case Manager reviews all case files, prepares the agenda for case management meetings, and chairs these meetings.

Another major concern influencing the development of the Central Wisconsin Service Delivery Area Job Centers was the feeling that there was a great deal of information lost for clients who had been in earlier programs. To ensure maximum

coordination of information, training and services for Job Center applicants, representatives of partner agencies utilize monthly Job Center case management to create an atmosphere which allows for maximum information exchange and shared decision making. This allows each agency the opportunity to bring to the attention of all other programs the availability of its clients for services.

Development of uniform assessment, employability, referral, case management, and file systems

Prior to the establishment of the Job Centers, it was not uncommon for applicants for multiple programs to be required to complete four or five separate applications. Therefore, it was necessary to develop one application form and procedure to be shared by all agencies, rather than the multiple applications previously used. Though facing much opposition, a common application was established to be used by all programs.

It was also understood that if referrals and information exchange were going to be maximized, a uniform employability development plan should be in place. A common EDP is in use in all Job Centers. Its use, in combination with a number of other common forms, has resulted in an increased number of program transfers, especially between JOBS and JTPA.

Since the Job Center development was an effort to bring together a number of agencies to work more cooperatively, it was important to develop an instrument to ensure that referrals were processed efficiently. In addition, it is important to ensure that feedback is provided by the agency to which a client is referred so that the referring agency knows what happens with the referral. In order to facilitate this process, a two-part referral form was developed and is used in all Job Centers by all Job Center agencies. The form includes a section specifying the reason for the referral to the particular agency and another section detailing the way that the referral is being handled by the agency to which the client was referred.

Another concern prior to developing the Job Centers was that a great deal of information was being gathered on clients that was not accessible by all agencies. In response, a common file system was developed in which every client has one common file which contains all information generated by any Job Center partner agency program. All partner agencies listed in the Release of Information included in the Job Center Application have access to the common file.

Finally, there was a great deal of duplication in terms of program staff contacting employers for the purpose of job development and placement. Many employers reported being contacted by multiple agency representatives, while others indicated that they had never been contacted. In order to increase services to employers and to minimize duplicate employer contacts, Job Center partner agencies developed a unified job development and placement system. Job Service and all JTPA and JOBS programs coordinate job development and share job orders. Employers are contacted by one individual representing all Job Center agencies, who promotes all of the programs available to employers and brings job orders

back to the center for joint use.

Provide education & literacy services in the Job Centers

Literacy services for Job Center clients are provided using three different delivery systems. Adult basic education classes are available in each of the Job Centers on a part-time basis. In addition, there is a network of computers in each Job Center available for skills upgrading or for work toward the High School Equivalency Diploma. The program is PLATO 2000 from The Roach Organization. This computer network and program were purchased through Job Training 2000 funds and funds from the UPS Foundation grant. Finally, individual tutoring is available for those who either are not ready for a class or the computer or whose skills are such that they need one-to-one tutoring. The classes are taught by teachers from Mid-State Technical College; the computer program is administered by the Literacy Council, Private Industry Council, or Mid-State teachers depending upon which agencies are in the individual Job Centers; and the tutoring is provided by the Literacy Council.

The inclusion of an Adult Basic Education class, the computer based learning and the Literacy Council in the Job Center has had many positive benefits. The most important is that there is immediate action for the client which lessens the problem of dropout on the way to a separate location. In addition it allows closer coordination of activities of the client with the other in-house agencies. This ensures that the student is receiving the kind of instruction he or she needs and that s/he is fulfilling the requirements of the programs in which s/he is enrolled.

The Goal Oriented Adult Learning (GOAL) Department at Mid-State Technical College, the Literacy Council of Wood County, and the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council believe strongly in the need for cooperative efforts among educators in the provision of adult literacy education services. There is no one agency that has complete ownership of the delivery of basic skills/literacy services, and there is an acknowledgement that all agencies have a legitimate role to play. With that agreement in place, it has been possible for the agencies to work together to design individual programs for clients. The Literacy Council is involved in the testing for JOBS clients and provides an introduction to the educational opportunities which are available. The basic skills teachers, the Literacy Council director and the case managers, together with the client, design the program to meet guidelines from the JOBS or JTPA programs.

The Wood County Literacy Coalition is an outgrowth of the agreement on literacy among the Literacy Council of Wood County, the GOAL Department at Mid-State Technical College and the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council. Before the formal organization of the Coalition, there was informal coordination among the three agencies. The Executive Director of the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council and the Dean of the GOAL Department at Mid-State Technical College are officers on the Board of Directors for the Literacy Council of Wood County. In addition, the Executive Director of the Literacy Council of Wood County and the

Executive Director of the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council are on the advisory committee for Adult Basic Education at Mid-State Technical College. The UPS Foundation grant made it possible to formally organize the Coalition and involve more agencies in the planning of delivery of adult literacy services in Wood County. This coalition's purpose is to eliminate duplication of services, to make the most efficient use of available resources and funds, to coordinate to tailor the right program to fit each client's needs, and to plug the holes which exist in service provision.

Agencies in the Central Wisconsin SDA realize that the need for basic skills services far exceeds the resource base of any one agency and that no one agency or educational design will successfully address all of a community's adult literacy needs. Also, duplication of services is unnecessary and counterproductive in terms of the best use of limited financial resources. The coordination in the Job Centers has proven to be the most fiscally responsible method of delivering the literacy services.

What makes the Central Wisconsin Job Center model work?

There is no right way to establish a Job Center. However, there are a number of things which seem to have served to nurture Job Center development. While these factors are not necessary conditions of Job Center development, they are useful for consideration.

Of primary importance to the success of the Central Wisconsin Job Centers is the fact that the Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council does not operate programs. The Private Industry Council believes that it is extremely difficult to get agencies to cooperate if the PIC is in direct competition for funds. Therefore, the PIC subcontracts most programs. Through strong local collaborative planning, strengths of the overall education, employment and training system have been identified. This serves to give certain program operators an "identity" as operators of these programs, no matter the funding source.

Through this same collaborative process, a number of areas where service gaps exist have been identifies. Since these are areas which are universally recognized as being weak, these areas become priorities for the future. By the same token, identified strengths in the system are built upon. An example is the technical college system which is recognized as one of the best in the nation. By identifying the strengths they provide for the system, other funding sources are encouraged to utilize them to provide the same system. As a result, the technical colleges provide the same occupational classroom and basic skills training across all Title IIA, Title III and JOBS programs. The majority of the subcontractors operate both JTPA and JOBS programs.

Job Center collaborative efforts are concentrated in areas not presently offered, or where resources are insufficient. When such areas exist, chances are it is because funds are insufficient, or there is a lack of direction, or the rewards are not great. These are areas where Job Center based strategies are developed

because of the need for a broad-based, multi-agency response.

An example is in the area of pre-GED services. In establishing close linkages with literacy councils and technical colleges in the Service Delivery Area for basic skills training, a need for training that bridges the gap between literacy tutoring and full-time enrollment in basic skills training was identified. As a result, a literacy coalition was established and development of computer based education as an additional basic skills resource was targeted. Since establishing this priority for the Central Wisconsin Service Delivery Area, coalition members have obtained several additional grants dedicated to expanding the area computer based network. The focus of the computer based learning system, to which numerous area agencies have now contributed hardware and software, is the Job Centers. All of the agencies which would implement the computer based education program were involved in the initial planning for the system, and all agreed on the system which was chosen. Thus, when additional locations were set up they had the same programs.

Initially, the computer based education was intended to fill the gap between literacy council tutoring and full-time classroom attendance. However, now its use is becoming more diverse. It is used as a supplement to tutoring for individuals who want to progress faster, but want to continue with a tutor as well. It is also used as a supplement to classroom instruction for additional practice on skills which are causing difficulty for the student. Through the coordination of all the agencies it has been possible for a student to utilize classroom instruction, tutoring, and computer assisted education to achieve his or her goal.

The PLATO system has several different report formats which show the student's initial grade level, current grade level achieved, total time spent in the program, activities completed and the date and amount of time spent with each activity. These reports are made available to all the agencies working with that student so all can keep abreast of progress, and everyone can know that individual's program and the lessons s/he has completed.

Another key factor in the success of the Central Wisconsin Job Centers is that duplication is carefully avoided by ensuring that no two agencies operate the same activity in the same geographic part of the SDA. The Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council subcontracts carefully by activity. It does not allow subcontracts which span multiple activities. While this may limit the ability to deal with problems of a particular target group quickly, it also reduces confusion and potential duplication. As a result, an atmosphere of cooperation is fostered, not competition.

There is a strong commitment to the collective goals of the Job Center partner agencies. This comes in part because of a strong level of commitment and leadership in Job Center development at the state level. When statewide commitment is strong, the local level of cooperation improves correspondingly. Staff in each Job Center are allowed and encouraged to develop a "dual identity" between their own agency and their Job Center. Initially this was a problem in the Central Wisconsin SDA primarily because some state agencies, including Job

Service, were reluctant to do anything that they felt would erode their identity. However, upon continued pressure to help staff in the Job Centers "find their own way", they quickly began to develop a common identity as Job Center staff. While this step may at first seem confusing or even unnecessary, it is crucial. Without allowing for the development of Job Center autonomy, you will not have a "Job Center", but nothing more than a group of co-located agency staff.

All agencies are accepted as equal partners regardless of their degree of participation in Job Center activities. A key to encouraging groups on the periphery of the employment and training scene to participate, is giving them a feeling that they are going to be heard. Some examples of these types of groups might include: human service agencies, literacy councils, and groups representing various target populations. Each of these agencies has an opportunity to participate fully in Job Center case management, just as those agencies with a full-time Job Center presence.

Thus, an agency such as the Literacy Council of Wood County, though it is not a federal or state funded agency, is directly involved in the case management of clients with which it is working. The Literacy Council director attends case management meetings and updates comments and information in the common file and the computer file for each client. In that way, all agencies which are working with the same client know what the individual is doing with the Literacy Council and in turn the Literacy Council is aware of what the client is doing with other agencies and can tailor the curriculum accordingly.

It is very important to acknowledge the role that coordination and collaboration have played in development of Job Centers in Wisconsin. This is especially important in our state, because, unlike what has happened in some other states, there is no mandated role for any one agency in the Job Centers. The only real impetus to develop a coordinated deliver system is a feeling among most state agencies that the "one-stop shopping" concept works. The state, especially the department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, has provided a great deal of leadership, but they have let local processes work in the Service Deliver Areas. For several years now, there have been regular collaborative planning meetings, which were originally called by the Governor and the local elected officials in each county of the Service Delivery Area. As a result, a number of the collaborative efforts have become broad-based strategies bought into by all of the agencies involved in the collaborative planning process.

All agencies in the Central Wisconsin Service Delivery Area have learned through cooperation and coordination that the "return" on coalition and Job Center participation far outweigh the "cost" of such an involvement. In return for giving up some freedom of action, some feeling of being the one agency in control of the client's program or of literacy provision, and some financial control; the agencies receive the assistance of shared support staff, increased referrals, and a better understanding of all member agency programs. The clients reap the greatest benefits in terms of better coordination of services, less paperwork, and easier and better access to programs which will meet their needs.

Members of the Wood County Literacy Coalition

Central Wisconsin Private Industry Council
Goodwill Industries
Literacy Council of Wood County
McMillan Memorial Library
Marshfield Area United Way
Marshfield Public Library
Mid-State Technical College GOAL Program
State of Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
United Way of South Wood County
Wisconsin Job Service
Wood County Department of Social Services
Wood County Unified Services

Referring Agency: _____
Staff: _____
Follow up: _____

JOB NETWORK REFERRAL TO: _____
Agency/Program

CLIENT NAME: _____ SS#: _____

ADDRESS: _____
Street City Zip

PHONE: _____ D.O.B.: _____

DRIVERS LICENSE: YES NO RELIABLE TRANS: YES NO JTPA ENROLLED BY REFERRING AGENT: YES NO

ENROLLED IN: _____

BARRIERS: _____

JOBS MANDATORY: YES NO READING TEST SCORE: _____ MATH TEST SCORE: _____

SKILLS/EXPRESSED AREA OF INTEREST: _____

_____

_____

_____

SUPPORT MONIES REQUESTED: YES NO CHILD CARE: _____ TRANS.: _____

OTHER: _____

REFERRAL FOLLOW UP

AGENCY/STAFF: _____

DATE OF APPT.: _____ SHOW: _____ NO SHOW: _____

DATE OF 2ND APPT: _____ SHOW: _____ NO SHOW: _____

ASSIGNED/ACTION TAKEN: _____

_____

_____

COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

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